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# Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 CIAE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00

RSC-01 NSC-07 NSCE-00 SP-02 PRS-01 IO-03 CU-05 USIA-04

PA-01 ACDA-10 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-10 CIEP-01 IGA-01

EB-03 L-02 DRC-01 H-01 /096 W
---------- 126845
R 241137Z SEP 74
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7029
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
CINCPAC HONOLULU

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 15357

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH
SUBJECT: GENERAL KRIT ON CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

1. THIS MESSAGE REPORTS THE FRANK DISCUSSION LASTING NEARLY AN HOUR AND A HALF WHICH THE DCM AND I HAD ON SEPTEMBER 23 WITH ARMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GENERAL KRIT SIWARA. FORTUITOUSLY, A MEETING WITH GENERAL KRIT, WHICH HAD BEEN PLANNED TO REVIEW THE GENERAL SITUATION PRIOR TO MY WEEKEND DEPARTURE TO THE UNITED STATES TO ATTEND THE SEATO COUNCIL MEETING, GAVE US A CHANGE TO OBTAIN HIS INSIGHTS ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS WHICH DEVELOPED OVER THE WEEKEND.

2. GENERAL KRIT BELIEVES PRIME MINISTER SANYA'S MOTIVES WERE GOOD WHEN HE MADES CERTAIN CONCESSIONS REGARDING THE CONSTITUTION TO UNIVERSITY STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS (SEPT. 20) BUT THAT THE MATTER WAS NOT HANDLED WELL. HE BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT THINGS ARE BACK ON TRACK, COUNTER-DEMONSTRATIONS STAGED SEPTEMBER 23 BY TECHNICAL SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL STRENGTHEN THE DETERMINATION OF THE
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NLA TO PASS THE THIRD READING OF THE CONSTITUTION IN

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THE ASSEMBLY IN EARLY OCTOBER AND ELECTIONS SHOULD TAKE PLACE
ON SCHEDULE--ON FEBRUARY 1, 1975.

3. KRIT, WHO HAD MET WITH PM SANYA EARLIER IN THE AFTER-
NOON, SAID THE STUDENTS AGITATING TO REDUCE THE AGE LIMIT
FOR VOTING AND FOR MEMBERSHIP IN PARLIAMENT, TO ABOLISH THE
UPPER HOUSE AND TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON THE INTRODUCTION
OF FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES REPRESENTED ONLY A SMALL
FRACTION OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. ONLY ONE SEGMENT OF THE NSCT,
INCLUDING AGITATORS SUCH AS THIRAYUTH, SEKSAN AND BOONSONG,
WHOM HE TERMED LEFTISTS, WAS INVOLVED IN ORGANIZING THE
SEPTEMBER 20 DEMOCRACY MONUMENT DEMONSTRATIONS. ALONG THIS
SAME VEIN, KRIT SAID SUCH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FORMERLY
AGITATED IN SUPPORT OF AND IN THE NAME OF THE KING; NOW
THEY DO NOT AND, IN FACT, SOME ARE OPPOSED TO THE MONARCHY.

4. KRIT NOTED THAT IN ADDITION TO OPPOSITION TO THE FOUR DEMANDS
AMONG LARGE NUMBERS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS THE SEPTEMBER 20
DEMONSTRATORS ARE STRONGLY OPPOSED BY
TECHNICAL SCHOOL STUDENTS. THIS LATTER GROUP TURNED OUT IN STRENGTH
ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 (KRIT SAID 20,000; OTHER SOURCES
PUT THE NUMBER AT ABOUT HALF THAT FIGURE) TO SUPPORT THE
DRAFT CONSITUTION AND THE ASSEMBLY'S REJECTION OF CHANGES
IN THE AGE LIMITS, PARTICULARLY FOR THE VOTING AGE WHICH
WAS NOT APPROPRIATE IN TERMS OF OTHER THAI PRACTICES.
KRIT BELIEVES THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL STUDENTS, WHO WERE IN THE
FOREFRONT OF THE OCTOBER 1973 DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE
FORMER MILITARY GOVERNMENT, SEE THE AGITATION BY UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS AS A MOVE WHICH WILL UNDO MUCH THAT HAS BEEN
ACHIEVED, IN PART BY THE BLOOD OF THE TECHNICAL STUDENTS.
KRIT IS NOT UNHAPPY ABOUT THE PRESENT SITUATION, HOWEVER,
AND BELIEVES THE FRAGMENTED YOUTH GROUPS WILL BE LESS OF
A THREAT TO STABILITY, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE TOUGHER
TECHNICAL STUDENTS HAVE LINED UP BEHIND THE MONARCHY AND
IN FAVOR OF THE PRESENT DRAFT CONSITUTION BEING APPROVED
BY THE NLA.

5. WITHOUT EVER QUITE SAYING SO OPENLY, KRIT IMPLIED THAT
PM SANYA HAD MISHANDLED THE STUDENT AGITATION DURING THE
PAST SEVERAL DAYS. SANYA'S OBJECTIVE, ACCORDING TO KRIT,
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WAS TO REDUCE THE DANGER OF A SERIOUS CONFRONTATION AND
INDUCE THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT GROUPS AGITATING IN FAVOR OF THEIR FOUR
POINTS TO DISPERSE PEACEFULLY. TOWARD THIS END, SANYA AGREED
TO TALK WITH A SMALL DELEGATION REPRESENTING THE STUDENTS,
AND FOLLOWING THIS THE STUDENT LEADERS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED TO
THE PRESS THAT SANYA SUPPORTED THEIR DEMANDS. KRIT IMPLIED
AND SAID THIS WAS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT THE
STUDENTS, IN THEIR MEETING WITH THE PRESS, MISQUOTED HIM,

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PROBABLY DELIBERATELY.

6. ASKED WHETHER SANYA WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OCCASION TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON HIS LONG-STANDING THREAT TO RESIGN, KRIT REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE. HE SAID SANYA HAD TOLD HIM A FEW DAYS EARLIER THAT HE WANTED TO RESIGN, BUT KRIT HAD TOLD HIM HE COULD NOT SINCE HIS RESIGNATION WOULD PRECIPITATE THE RESIGNATION OF THE ENTIRE CABINET. THIS, KRIT, SHOULD BE AVERTED. SINCE THAILAND HAS ALREADY HAD THREE CABINETS DURING THE PAST YEAR, KRIT BELIEVES IT WOULD BE MOST UNWISE TO PRECIPITATE ANOTHER GOVERNMENT CRISIS. KRIT DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED WITH SANYA THE POSSIBILITY OF THE PRIME MINISTER TAKING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR A FEW WEEKS, LEAVING DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRACHOB AS ACTING PM IN HIS ABSENCE. KRIT DISCOUNTED THE POSSIBILITY THAT SANYA WOULD EXTEND HIS LEAVE UNTIL THE ELECTIONS NEXT FEBRUARY AND FELT THE LEAVE WOULD LAST ONLY A FEW WEEKS.

7. ASKED WHETHER THE ASSEMBLY MIGHT NOT AMEND THE CONSTITUTION FOLLOWING ITS PASSAGE ON OCTOBER 5, KRIT SAID SUCH ACTION WAS UNLIKELY. ANY CHANGE IN THE CONSTITUTION OR IN BASIC THAI POLICY, KRIT OPINED WITH ASSURANCE, SHOULD BE LEFT TO THE GOVERNMENT TO BE FORMED AFTER ELECTIONS. THE PRESENT ASSEMBLY, WHICH IS NOT A REGULAR PARLIAMENT BUT WAS FORMED PRIMARILY TO DRAFT A CONSTITUTION, SHOULD BE DISSOLVED IMMEDIATELY AFTER A CONSTITUTION IS ADOPTED AND SHOULD TAKE NO FUTHER ACTION.

8. KRIT WAS QUITE OPTIMISTIC THAT THE NECESSARY VOTES COULD BE MUSTERED TO PASS THE CONSTITUTION ON OCTOBER 5. (SOME SOURCES SAY THE VOTE WILL TAKE PLACE OCT 4.). HOWEVER, HE HAS NO INTENTION OF BEING OUT OF THE COUNTRY ON THAT

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DATE. (KRIT TOLD US THAT HE WILL LEAVE FOR KOREA ON SEPTEMBER 26 FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT. HE ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO RETURN OCTOBER 10, BUT HAS MOVED UP HIS DEPARTURE IN ORDER TO BE PRESENT DURING THE VOTE).

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RSC-01 NSC-07 NSCE-00 SP-02 PRS-01 IO-03 CU-05 USIA-04

PA-01 ACDA-10 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-10 CIEP-01 IGA-01

EB-03 L-02 DRC-01 H-01 /096 W
---------- 127187
R 241137Z SEP 74
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7030
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
CINCPAC HONOLULU

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 15357

LIMDIS

9. WHEN WE ASKED ABOUT ATTITUDES WITHIN THE ARMY REGARDING THE PRESENT GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS, KRIT SAID SOME "HOT HEADS" WITHIN THE RANKS THOUGHT THIS LATEST CRISIS WAS THE LAST STRAW, AND FAVORED A MORE AGGRESSIVE POLICY BY THE ARMY. HOWEVER, KRIT AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICERS OPPOSE ANY MOVE WHATSOEVER. HIS POLICY REMAINS ONE OF SUPPORTING THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT WHILE CAREFULLY WATCHING THE SITUATION. AS KRIT PUT IT, WAVING HIS HANDS IN A STEADY COURSE, "THE ARMY WILL FLY LEVEL".

10. KRIT STRESSED THAT THE MAJOR PROBLEM FACING THE MILITARY (AND PRESUMABLY HIM IN KEEPING THE HOT HEADS IN LINE) INVOLVED INADEQUATE FUNDS. THE BUDGET, HE SAID, IS SERIOUSLY DOWN BECAUSE OF INFLATION AND COMPETING DEMANDS FROM OTHER SECTORS OF THE GOVERNMENT. MEANWHILE, THAILAND'S SECURITY SITUATION REMAINS SERIOUS. KRIT SAID HE WAS AWARE OF DEFENSE MINISTER KHRUAN'S TALKS WITH ME ON SEPTEMBER 12 (BANGKOK 14721). HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL POSITION OF THAILAND'S ARMED FORCES IS EXTREMELY SERIOUS AND URGED US TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO HELP.
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I TOLD KRIT THAT OUR HEARTS WERE IN THE RIGHT PLACE BUT THE FUNDS WERE NOT. I STRESSED THE INFLATIONARY PROBLEMS WHICH WE FACE AT HOME, IN ADDITION TO COMPETING DEMANDS FROM DOMESTIC REQUIREMENTS AND OTEHER HIGH PRIORITY FOREIGN AID NEEDS, MANY OF WHICH ARE IN THAILAND'S OWN SECURITY

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INTERESTS. AS A RESULT OF THIS SITUATION, THE ENTIRE
FUTURE OF GRANT MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID IS UNCERTAIN.
WE WILL DO OUR BEST, I SAID BUT WE CANNOT PROMISE TO
MAINTAIN OUR MILITARY AID EVEN AT PRESENT LEVELS. AS A
RESULT, WE NEED TO BE MORE IMAGINATIVE; WE NEED TO FIND OTHER
WAYS TO HELP THAILAND MEET ITS ESSENTIAL NEEDS. AS ONE
POSSIBILITY, I SAID WE NEEDED TO EXPLORE MORE THOROUGHLY
THE POSSIBILITY OF EXCESS MILITARY ITEMS ELSEWHERE AROUND
THE WORLD WHICH MIGHT BE USEFUL TO THAILAND. SECONDLY,
WE SHOULD CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTRACTUAL ARRANGE-
MENT UNDER WHICH THE THAI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WOULD MAINTAIN
SEVERAL OF THE BASES ON A STANDBY BASIS. THIS WOULD ENABLE
THE THAI ARMED FORCES TO SHARE IN THE BENEFITS OF OUR
EXPENDITURES FOR THIS PURPOSE. (I HAVE MADE THIS SUGGESTION
TO WASHINGTON BEFORE--IT DESERVES SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.)

11. I THEN ASKED KRIT WHAT HE THOUGHT ABOUT POPULAR
ATTITUDES TOWARD THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE. KRIT
REITERATED VIEWS HE HAS EXPRESSED BEFORE THAT
OPPOSITION TO THE U.S. PRESENCE IS LIMITED TO SMALL
GROUPS. PEOPLE IN UDORN, NAKON PHANOM, KORAT AND
OTHER AREAS AROUND U.S. OCCUPIED BASES WANT THE U.S.
TO REMAIN. SO DOES THE THAI GOVERNMENT. KRIT MENTIONED
THAT THIS SITUATION WAS DISCUSSED IN THE CABINET THE
PREVIOUS WEEK AND THAT HE HAD TAKEN A STRONG STAND IN
FAVOR OF A CONTINUED PRESENCE. HE HAD BEEN SUPPORTED
BY GENERAL LEK OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL. PRIME
MINISTER SANYA HAD ALSO AGREED THAT THE SITUATION IN
SOUTHEAST ASIA WAS SUCH THAT A U.S. PRESENCE IN THAILAND
WAS DESIRABLE. I EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THESE VIEWS AND
ASKED KRIT TO LET ME KNOW IF IN HIS JUDGMENT FURTHER
ANNOUNCED WITHDRAWALS WERE DESIRABLE IF THE U.S. PRESENCE
BECAME A TROUBLESOME ISSUE DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD.
HE PROMISED TO DO SO.

12. CONCLUDING THE DISCUSSION, KRIT SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT
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SERIOUS TROUBLE ON OCTOBER 14TH, THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE
OVERTHROW OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, AS A PRE-
CAUTIONARY MOVE, ALL ARMY TROOPS WILL BE CONFINED TO THEIR
BASES DURING THAT PERIOD AND TOLD TO KEEP OFF THE STREETS.
DESPITE THIS LACK OF A VISIBLE ARMY SECURITY FORCE, KRIT
BELIEVES THE MORE ACTIVE ROLE BEING TAKEN BY TECHNICAL
SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL DISCOURAGE THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FROM
CAUSING DIFFICULTY AND THAT--DESPITE WHAT SOME ASTROLOGERS
ARE SAYING--THAILAND WILL GET THOUGH THIS PERIOD WITH
NO GREAT DIFFICULTY.

13. COMMENT: KRIT'S VIEWS REGARDING DEVELOPMENTS

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DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS ARE GENERALLY CONSISTENT WITH INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES. HE HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN IN TOUCH WITH SANYA AND OTHER TOP ACTORS AND HAS, AS USUAL, BEEN TRYING TO STIFFEN SANYA'S SPINE. IT'S OBVIOUS THAT HE WANTS SANYA TO REMAIN IN OFFICE TO AVOID OPENING THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM. HE GAVE THE CLEAR IMPRESSION SANYA WILL STAY, AND HE PROBABLY EXPECTS THE KING TO URGE THAT HE DO SO.

14. KRIT WAS FULL OF PRAISE FOR THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO HAVE RALLIED TO THE GOVERNMENT'S DEFENSE. WE WOULD NOT TOTALLY RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE HAS MORE THAN AN ACADEMIC INTEREST IN THEIR ACTIVITIES. NONE-THELES, THIS SHOW OF FORCE MAY WELL STRENGTHEN SANYA'S HAND AND GIVE HIM THE PUSH NECESSARY TO GET THROUGH AND ACCEPT THE THIRD READING OF THE CONSTITUTION ON OCTOBER 5. FOLLOWING THAT KRIT BELIEVES THE SITUATION CAN BE CONTAINED BY THE PROMISE OF A REVIEW OF THE VOTING AGE AND OTHER MATTERS WHEN THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED FOLLOWING ELECTIONS OF THE NEW NLA. (WE ARE ASSESSING THIS SEPARATELY.)

15. REGARDING THE U.S. PRESENCE, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT KRIT IS ONE OF OUR STRONGEST SUPPORTERS WITHIN THE INNER GOVERNMENT CIRCLE. HOWEVER, THERE ARE OTHER VOICES, AND WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO HAVE A FURTHER SMALL WITHDRAWAL PACKAGE AVAILABLE FOR USE WHEN AND IF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGNING HEATS UP. WHEN KRIT DEPARTED, I HAD THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT KRIT, WHILE NOT HAPPY ABOUT THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF SOME

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STUDENT AGITATION AND DEMONSTRATIONS, WAS CONFIDENT IN HIS FEEL FOR AND ABILITY TO HANDLE THE FORTHCOMING OCTOBER ANNIVERSARY OF LAST YEAR'S UPHEAVAL.
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